

לעילו נשמת: פייגה בת הרב אהרן ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

לזכות רפואה שלמה: מלכה בת רחל, מיכאל בן שולמית, יעקב משה בן דבורה שירה, ואברהם יהודה בן שרה רבקה.

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita

Mattos Massei



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Torah Wellsprings

Mattos - Massei

The Reward that Awaits Us

When someone accidentally kills his fellow man, he must run to one of the *arei miklat*, cities of refuge. As long as he is in the *ir miklat*, the *goel hadom* (the victim's relative) doesn't have permission to take revenge. But if this murderer leaves the *ir miklat*, the *goel hadam* has permission to kill him to avenge his relative's death. As it states (35:26), **וְאִם יֵצֵא יָצֵא** **וְהָרְצָח אֶת גְּבוּל עִיר מִקְלָמוֹ... וְרָצַח גֹּאֵל הָרְצָח אֶת הָרְצָח אִין לֹ דָם**, "If the murderer will leave the... city of refuge (*arei miklat*)... and the relative kills him, the relative isn't guilty."

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni 788) teaches that even if the murderer took only just one step out of the city's limits (as implied by **יָצֵא יָצֵא**, which means that he

only barely left), he could be murdered by a relative.

The Midrash says, "If for taking just one step one can become liable for death, certainly then, how much will one earn when he takes just one step to do something good."

The Chidushei HaRim elaborates, "The rule is, **מִדָּה טוֹבָה מְרֻבָּה**, one receives more reward for doing a good deed than the extent of the punishment that is allotted for one's sins. [If the death penalty is given for someone who takes one bad step, certainly], if a person awakens early to daven and to learn Torah, he will be rewarded for each step he takes."

It isn't easy to rise early in the morning. The bed pulls him down; he feels bound. But if a person will jump out of bed to serve

Hashem, he will be rewarded for each step. The same is true for running away from an *aveirah* or when one quickly closes his eyes so that he doesn't see something forbidden. For these matters, one will be rewarded immensely.

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* described the value of one good step: Imagine two people walking towards an escalator. One of them takes one step more than the other. With that one step, he lands on the escalator. He will soon be on the next floor. His friend didn't take that step, so he is left behind. See the value of just one step!

Nevuchadnezzar became a mighty king, and the lineage of his kingship was passed down to his children and descendants. How did he merit this? Furthermore, he conquered Yerushalayim. Yirmiyahu (12:1-2) was bothered by Nevuchadnezzar's power and success, as he said, מדוע

דרך רשעים צלחה, "Why do *resha'im* succeed?"

The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 96.) tells the secret behind Nevuchadnezzar's success:

At one point in Nevuchadnezzar's life, he was the scribe for the king of Bavel, Mirodach Beladan. Once, the sun shone ten hours longer than usual, and Mirodach Beladan wanted to know the reason for this miracle. People told him that Chizkiyahu HaMelech was ill, and the sun shone ten extra hours to heal him.

Mirodach Beladan decided that for such a special king, he must write a letter. Nevuchadnezzar, the scribe wasn't there at the time, so another scribe wrote up the letter. He wrote, שלמא למלכא חזקיה, שלם, שלא לקרתא דירושלים, שלם לאלק רבה, "Peace to the king Chizkiyahu, peace to the city Yerushalayim, and peace to the great G-d."

When Nevuchadnezzar arrived, he asked them what they wrote in the letter. They told him. He said, "You address Hashem as אֱלֹהֵי רַבָּה, The Great G-d, and then you place his name last in the letter? You should have written, "Peace to the great G-d, peace to Yerushalayim, and peace to King Chizkiyahu."

They told him, "Since you identified the problem, you should be the one to correct it."

Nevuchadnezzar ran four *parsah* to catch up with the messenger who was delivering the letter. He did this because he wanted to rewrite the letter. *Malach* Gavriel stopped him after four *parsah*. Reb Yochanan taught: "If *malach* Gavriel didn't stop him, [and Nevuchadnezzar would run some more] there would be no hope, *chalilah*, for the Jewish nation." If Nevuchadnezzar ran some more for Hashem's honor, the merit of this good deed would give Nevechadnezzar

so much success that he would be able to annihilate the Jewish nation.

The *Zohar* (and several Midrashim) also tell this story; only they write that Nevuchadnezzar ran three steps, and then the *malach* Gavriel stopped him. According to this *girsah*, the incredible power and success that was given to Nevuchadnezzar were for just three steps that he went to honor Hashem!

The Gemara adds that from Nevuchadnezzar's reward we can deduce the amazingly great reward that will be given to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, for they served Hashem so much more than Nevuchadnezzar.

We also take many good steps to honor Hashem: We walk to go to daven, to learn Torah, and we do many other good deeds to honor Hashem. Our reward will be great! For each good deed, the reward will be enormous.

Growth through Tests and Challenges

The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni Yeshayah 506*) states, "The Jewish nation says to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, 'You know the strength of the *yetzer hara*, how strong it is!'"

Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, "Remove the *yetzer hara* little by little in Olam HaZeh... and in Olam HaBa I will remove the *yetzer hara* from you."

Each victory over the *yetzer hara* results in the complete removal of the *yetzer hara* in the future.

And, we add, that even those times that we fail a test, it can still be counted as part of the process towards attaining perfection. There were forty-two *מסעות*, travels, in the desert, and at some of those travels or encampments, the Jewish nation sinned. But all of them are counted among the 42 journeys that

eventually brought the Jewish nation into Eretz Yisrael.

As the Sfas Emes (5646 *ד"ה תלה*) writes, "All of their travels are listed to let the nation of Hashem know that they shouldn't feel down when they fall because that is the way things go: there are ups and downs. When Bnei Yisrael reached a place of tranquility and attained a level of peace following a challenge, a new struggle appeared. *ויסעו ויחנו ויסעו ויחנו*, [they had ups and downs]. As it states (*Tehillim 84*), *ילכו מוחיל אל חיל* 'they go from strength to strength.' They don't have respite, because they were created to fight this battle..."

Consider this *mashal*:

When a person is traveling to Yerushalayim, he doesn't only ascend on his journey. There will be times when he goes down mountains, too, but it is all on the path to Yerushalayim. Similarly, the road to

success in avodas Hashem has descents, too. It isn't only continuous growth. But when we pick ourselves up again, we rise to even higher levels than ever before.

An outstanding student in Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach's yeshiva used to learn with a lot of *hasmadah*. However, things changed when he was going through a hard period, and he wasn't learning as well as he wanted to. He spoke about this with Reb Shlomo Zalman. Reb Shlomo Zalman explained to him that it was to be expected because life has many ups and downs, and when one does the best that he can in each situation, he will ultimately reach very high levels.

Reb Shlomo Zalman told his student the following *meshal*:

Someone gave expensive fabric to a tailor, and asked him to sew a suit. The tailor cut the cloth in many

different places, and the man told him, "Why are you cutting my expensive cloth in so many different ways? Why are there so many small pieces? They will go to waste!"

But when the tailor finished the job, he saw that one small piece of cloth became a collar, another became a pocket, and so on.

Similarly, Reb Shlomo Zalman explained, there are times we don't understand why we have to struggle in avodas Hashem. According to our understanding, things should be different. But there is a plan. If you do the best you can in every situation, an excellent product will emerge.

Today, this young student is a renowned *rosh yeshiva*.

Someone came to Shamai and asked him to convert him while he stands on one foot. The

Gemara (*Shabbos* 31.) says, דחפו באמת הבנין שבידו, "Shamai pushed him away with the building, measuring stick that was in his hand."

The Meor Einayim (*Yismach Lev*, end of *Beitzah*) explains that when the convert asked to become a *ger* while standing "on one foot," he meant that he wanted only to do good from now on, and never do wrong. He wanted to convert on the condition that he would only have *aliyos*, growth, and never *yeridos*, setbacks. Shamai pushed him away with the אמת הבנין which hints to the בנין, building bricks of the world. The world was created with darkness and light, ups and downs. It is impossible to expect always to do good and never to err. That isn't how the world was constructed. Shamai was telling him that his expectations were impossible.

Hillel accepted the man, and he converted him, but then Hillel also taught him

that his request was irrational. Hillel told him, מה דעלך סני לחברך לא תעביד, "What you hate for yourself don't do for your friend." The Meor Einayim writes that the intention is as follows:

Hillel asked him, "How would you feel if you buy a slave and the slave tells you, 'I can work for you in your house, and I can do all kinds of light jobs, but I don't work in the field. I don't do hard labor' Would you accept that? You wouldn't be happy with his conditions. You bought the slave to work for you and to accept any mission you give him. We are Hashem's slaves, as it states (*Vayikrah* 25:55), כי לי בני ישראל עבדים. So, how can we say to Hashem, 'I only want to do easy services, but when there is a hard service, or when there is a danger that I might sin in that area, I don't want to take on the mission'? It isn't up to you to decide. Hashem sends each individual where He wants to. And if Hashem

puts people in challenging situations, one has to accept the reality that Hashem chose for him.

One example of this lesson is to be a *melamed*, a Torah teacher to children. A good *melamed*, who is fitting for this position, can do so much good for the children. He can make a positive impression on the children that will remain with them their entire lives. But there's a risk factor involved because there's a possibility that even a good teacher might harm a student, discourage him, fail to get through to a student, and so on. The Meor Einayim is teaching us that a slave can't tell his master that he doesn't want to do hard, dangerous jobs.

Similarly, we must accept the missions that Hashem gives us. If it is his destiny to be a *melamed*, he should accept it. Even if there is risk involved, if Hashem sends him there, he can't refrain.

It states (33:2), ויכתוב משה את מוצאיהם למסעיהם על פי ה' ואלה מסעיהם למוצאייהם, "Moshe wrote their departures and their travels by Hashem's decree. And these are their travels and their departures..." The *meforshim* note that מוצאייהם and מסעיהם "travels and departures" are expressed in two different orders in this *pasuk*. Also, it needs to be understood why the מוצאייהם, "departures" are mentioned. If they traveled, they obviously departed from their last stopover, so why does it need to be expressed?

Rebbe Shimon of Amshinov *zt'l* said that מסעיהם, travels, hints to the times when *avodas Hashem* is going well. One feels that he is "traveling," growing, and getting places in his *avodas Hashem*. מוצאייהם refers to the times when one has temptations and challenges, and he must "depart" from those feelings and overcome his *yetzer hara*.

The מוצאות are על פי ה', the primary battle that Hashem wants from us. וכתוב משה את מוצאות, Moshe wrote down these battles, because they are so precious. These battles and struggles are more valuable than the מסעים, the times when he is growing rapidly in Hashem's service, and the yetzer hara isn't disturbing him. If he battles with the yetzer hara, the end will be למסעים, that he will travel well and smoothly in his *avodas Hashem*.

The *pasuk* concludes, ואלה מסעים למוצאות. This means that, at times, Hashem gives a person freedom from the *yetzer hara*, and he "travels" smoothly in his *avodas Hashem*. Hashem grants him these successful moments so that when he will be tested, he will have desire and encouragement to pass the test. This is the meaning of, ואלה מסעים למוצאות, the reason for the triumphant moments in *avodas Hashem* is that he

can afterward have the strength and desire to depart from the *yetzer hara* when he is tested.

Hashem Believes that you can Pass the Tests

The Sefer Chasidim (13) writes, "When Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires to bestow kindness on a person, the Satan (who is the *middas hadin*) comes before Hashem and says 'Ribono Shel Olam, it isn't proper to grant him these benefits before he passes a test.'" This encourages us to pass the tests that are sent our way because it is likely that in its aftermath, we will receive Hashem's kindness. This might be the test that precedes the kindness Hashem desires to bestow upon us.

It states (*Tehillim* 92:3), להגיד בבקר חסדך ואמונתך בלילות, "To tell your *chasadim* by day and Your *emunah* at night." The Rebbe of Alexander zt'l (*Akeidas Yitzchak*) notes that the *pasuk* is referring

to Hashem's *emunah* (אמונתך). We understand that we should be praised for keeping our *emunah* by night, at times of hardships, by why is Hashem praised for His *emunah*? The answer is we are praising Hashem that He has *emunah* in every Yid that he will pass the test. We praise Hashem for having that faith in us.

The Rebbe of Alexander taught this *vort* to his chassidim during the Holocaust, in the concentration camps. They asked him for *chizuk*, and he told them this idea. Hashem believes in us that we will pass the test!

There is a principle that Hashem doesn't present a person with a challenge that is too hard for him to overcome. If he was tested, that means he can pass the test. This famous principle is seen in this week's *parashah*. The Torah permits the *goel hadam* to kill the murderer because he simply can't control himself. As it states (*Devarim*

19:6), פן ירדוף גואל הדם אחרי הרוצח כי, "Lest the *goel hadam* will chase the murderer because *his heart is hot*..." Can we blame him for wanting to kill the murderer? It is only natural that he wants to take revenge, and he, therefore, isn't responsible or guilty if he kills him (under the circumstances specified in the Torah).

The Rambam (*Hilchos Rotzeiach* 7:8) says, הגולה אינו יוצא מעיר מקלטו לעולם... ואפילו כל ישראל מצריכין להשועתו, "The exiled one doesn't leave his *ir miklat* (city of refuge)... and even if all of Bnei Yisrael need him to save them." This is referring to when the *rotzeiach* is a commanding general, and the like, and he is indispensable. Nevertheless, he doesn't leave the *ir miklat*, because if he goes, his life is at risk.

The Or Someiach asks, why doesn't the *beis din* permit him to leave the *ir miklat* (since the people need him) and the *beis din* can

decree that the *goel hadam* can't kill him?

The Or Someiach answers that the Torah never gives a law that is impossible for a person to keep. The Torah understands the vengeance the *goel hadom* feels. He can't refrain from killing the murderer. It is something beyond his control, and one is never tested with something that is beyond his abilities.

There is another indication in this week's parashah to the concept that Hashem doesn't test a person beyond his abilities. There were six primary *arei miklat*, three on either side of the Yarden. Moshe designated three cities to be *arei miklat* in עבר הירדן, across the Yarden. Still, they didn't take effect until the other three were selected and prepared in Eretz Yisrael proper (see *Rashi* on 35:12).

The Meshech Chachmah explains that the murderers

living in *arei miklat* always hoped that perhaps the *cohen gadol* would die soon, and they would be set free. As it states (35:28), כי בעיר מקלטו, ישב עד מות הכהן הגדול ואחרי מות הכהן, הגדל ישוב הרצח אל ארץ אחותו, "Because he should live in the *arei miklat* until the *cohen gadol* dies..."

Now, Elazar was the *cohen gadol*, and he was promised that he would live until Bnei Yisrael conquer the land. As it states (34:17), אלה שמות האנשים, אשר ינחלו לכם את הארץ אלעזר הכהן, "These are the people who will inherit the land for you: Elazar HaCohen..." If the *arei miklat* would be in service as soon as Moshe prepared three of them, the murderers who will live there wouldn't have the hope that perhaps the *cohen gadol* will die quickly and they can go free. They would know that they must remain in the *arei miklat* until the entire Eretz Yisrael is conquered and settled. Taking away their hope is too hard for them to

endure, and Hashem doesn't present an individual with a test that is too difficult for him to pass.

Therefore, the *arei miklat* were not put into service (as *arei miklat*) until Eretz Yisrael was conquered and settled.

Success is Achieved Solely with Emunah in Hashem

After conquering the lands of Sichon and Og, the *shevatim* Gad and Reuven¹ informed Moshe that they want to live in עבר הירדן. They explained to Moshe that they have many sheep, and they preferred to live in עבר הירדן where there was good pasture.

Moshe told them (32:6-7), האחיכם יבאו למלחמה ואתם תשבו פה, "Will your brothers go to war [to conquer Eretz Yisrael] while you remain

here?" This will discourage them. They will be afraid to wage war without the entire Jewish nation being there with them.

Gad and Reuven promised Moshe that they would go to war together with the rest of Bnei Yisrael. They said (32:17-18), ויאמרו נחליץ, חושים לפני בני ישראל עד אשר אם הביאנום אל מקומם ... לא נשוב אל בתינו עד, עד התנחל בני ישראל איש נחלתו, "We will go to war at the front of Bnei Yisrael's army until they are settled... We won't return to our homes until Bnei Yisrael are settled, each person in his property."

Moshe agreed to those terms. The *meforshim* note that Moshe didn't merely say, "O.K. Under those conditions, I agree." Instead, Moshe spoke with elaboration, almost repeating everything Gad and Reuven said. As it states (32:20), ויאמר אליהם משה אם,

1. The Ibn Ezra writes that Gad is mentioned first, because it was Gad's idea.

תעשון את הדבר הזה, אם תחלצו לפני ה' למלחמה... ונכבשה הארץ לפני ה'... והיתה הארץ הזאת לכם לאחווה... "Moshe told them, 'If you will do this matter, and if you will go out to war, before Hashem... and if you will conquer the land before Hashem... then you may inherit this property...' The *meforshim* ask, what is the purpose of the repetition? What would be lacking if the Torah writes that "Moshe agreed to the terms of Gad and Reuven, and permitted them to inherit the land בבער הירדן?

There is another question, because, after Moshe's condition, the tribes of Gad and Reuven repeated the entire condition, in many words, as it states (32: 25-26):

ויאמר בני גר ובני ראובן אל משה לאמר עבדיך יעשו כאשר אדני מצווה... ועבדיך יעברו כל חלוצי צבא לפני ה' למלחמה כאשר אדני דבר "The people of Gad and Reuven said to Moshe: 'Your servants will do as our master commands... Your servants will go with

weapons, before Hashem, to war, as our master said..."

However, the *meforshim* say that if we read the *pesukim* carefully, we will see that Moshe didn't repeat Gad's and Reuven's words exactly. The primary difference being the words לפני ה', "before Hashem." Moshe repeated those words several times in his discussion with Gad and Reuven, and after Moshe's response, Gad and Reuven repeated Moshe's words (adding לפני ה'). But the first time they spoke, they didn't say לפני ה'.

When the tribes of Gad and Reuven spoke for the first time, their words implied that they would win the war *on their own*. Moshe told them that you couldn't win battles without Hashem; you can't do anything without Hashem. When you go to war, your intention should be that you are fighting *with Hashem's help*. That was the additional clause that

Moshe inserted. Gad and Reuven had to repeat that they will go to war "before Hashem," because they didn't say it before.

After this, Moshe repeats yet another time, תנאי כפול, the condition that they must go to war לפני ה' . They will win their battles solely with this awareness. Without this awareness, they will fail.

About the war against the Midyanim it states (31:53), אנשי הצבא בזו איש לו, "The soldiers grabbed the spoils of war, each person for himself." The Taam Tzvi explains that they thought they were grabbing the spoils of war on their own, by their own abilities. The Torah reveals that each one took איש לו the amount that was destined for him.

About this war, it states (31:4), אלף למטה אלף למטה, "A thousand per shevet; a thousand per shevet." The Midrash (22:3) says that this means a thousand members of each shevet went to war,

and another thousand went along with them, to daven for them.

Reb Yechezkel Levinstein ז"ל asked: (1) why did one thousand men have to go out to the battlefield to pray? Couldn't they pray in a beis medresh near their homes? (2) Why was it necessary that a thousand (per shevet) should daven? Why wasn't a minyan sufficient? (3) This war was a mitzvah; Hashem told them to wage this war. This means they will undoubtedly succeed. So why did they need tefillos?

Reb Yechezkel Levinstein answered that if the warriors will think they are fighting and winning wars by their own might that will remove Hashem's hashgachah pratis, and they will lose the battles. Therefore, a thousand people went along to daven for a thousand warriors. They were with them on the battlefield to remind the warriors that they are

winning the war with *tefillah*, not by their strength.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 119.) states:

Rebbe asked Reb Yishmael b'Reb Yosi: "The wealthy people of Eretz Yisrael, what merit do they have to earn their wealth?"

Reb Yishmael replied that it is because they give *maasar*. As it states (*Devarim* 14:22), עֵשֶׂר תַּעֲשֶׂה, "Give *maasar*, and you will become wealthy."

"The wealthy people of Bavel, what merit do they have to earn their wealth?"

"It is because they honor the Torah."

"And the wealthy people of other lands, what merit do they have to earn their wealth?"

"It is because they honor the Shabbos."

The Gemara tells that Reb Chiya bar Abba was once a guest in Ludkiya, and he described the

immense wealth he saw there. "The table was made of gold. It was so big and heavy; it was carried with sixteen people. The table had sixteen silver chains; dishes, cups, and jugs were attached to it. On the table were all kinds of foods, sweets, and *besamim*.... I asked him, 'My son, how did you merit this?'

He replied, "I was a butcher. Whenever there was a good animal, I said 'I will keep it for Shabbos.'"

Reb Chiya said, אֲשֶׁרִיד, שְׂכִיבִית וּבְרוּךְ הַמְּקוֹם שְׂוִיכָךְ לְכָךְ, "Fortunate are you that you merited this. And Baruch Hashem that He granted it to you!"

Why did Reb Chiya want to know how his host became wealthy? We can explain that generally, wealth has ups and downs, as Chazal say, גִּלְגַּל הוּא הַחֹזֶר, בעולם, it is like a wheel that turns around in the world. But Reb Chiya saw that his host's wealth was secure; it was going up and up and

never down. He wanted to know how he merited this. The answer is he honored the Shabbos. The message of Shabbos is that Hashem created the world and that everything in it is from Him. When one remembers that his wealth comes from Hashem, the wealth will remain with him, and it won't ever be taken from him.

The Midrash (*Bamidbar Rabba* 22:7) states, "There are three good gifts that Hashem created in the world [wisdom, strength, and wealth], and if one has one of them, the entire world is his. If he has wisdom, he has everything. If he has strength, he has everything. And if he has wealth, he has everything. But that is only when the gifts were given to him from Heaven... Because wisdom, strength, and wealth that humans take on their own are worth nothing at all... What people take on their own

will cease [and when Hashem gives it is forever]."

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* says that this Midrash is very difficult to understand - a *Midrash plyingah* - because isn't everything from Hashem? What does the Midrash mean humans can take that wisdom, strength, and wealth?

The Chidushei HaRim answers that obviously everything is from Hashem. The Midrash is referring to what the person thinks. If he thinks his wisdom, strength, or wealth was given to him by Hashem, it will remain with him. But if he thinks he took it on his own, it will be taken away from him.

We say, אמת מלכנו אפס זולתו, "Our King is true; there is none other than Him." Many people are aware that the King is true (אמת מלכנו), but they think that they are included in the picture. They believe they also do something with

their *hishtadlus*. Therefore, we clarify, **אפס זולתו**, there is none other than Hashem. Hashem does everything alone.

About *mattan Torah* it states (*Shemos* 20:15), **רואים את**, **הקולות**, that the Jewish nation "saw the voices." As Chazal express it, "They saw what is generally heard." Tzaddikim explain, when it comes to *parnassah*, the human eyes see that when someone works hard and diligently, he will earn a lot of money. But we "hear" and we are told that it isn't so. It isn't Our toil that brings *parnassah*; it's by Hashem's decree. By *mattan Torah*, they reached a high level of *emunah* until they "saw the voices." This means, it was like they saw the truth of what they were always told, that *parnassah* comes from Hashem's decree, and not from their work.

It states (*Tehillim* 127:2), **יגיע** **כי האכל**, **בפך**, "You will eat the work of your palms." Notice that the *pasuk*

doesn't say you will eat from the work of your "hands" instead "the work of your palms." Why? The palm isn't the only part of the hand that works. Without fingers, man isn't able to work properly.

This *pasuk* is discussing *hishtadlus*. *Hishtadlus* is called the work of the palm so we remember that just as the palm can't work alone, so too, we can't do anything without Hashem.

The next words of the *pasuk* are, **אשריך וטוב לך**, "You are fortunate, and it's good for you." He is fortunate, indeed, when he knows it's just **יגיע בפך**, only *hishtadlus*, but *parnassah* comes from Hashem.

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner *zt'l* taught, "When one goes to the marketplace to do business and believes that the item he chose to buy and the price that was agreed upon were all planned by Hashem's *hashgachah*, and similarly when a person goes to the

market to sell and believes that the item he decided to sell and the price they agreed upon was all by Hashem's *hashgachah*, I guarantee that Hashem will give him *hatzlachah*. Although, you may ask, who am I to guarantee? Nevertheless, I guarantee it!"

The Ben Ish Chai (*Ben Yohayoda, Beitzah* 16.) says that *הן טוב* spells *הן טוב* good charm. He explains these words according to kabbalah, and then he writes, "With this I explained the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 84:12), *הן וכבוד יתן ה' לא ימנע טוב, להולכים בתמים*, "Hashem will give *הן* and honor. He will not refrain from giving *טוב* to those who trust in Him." Hashem will give *הן* and *טוב* to those who have *bitachon*. The Ben Ish Chai concludes, "If someone desires his home should be filled with gold and silver, or if a person desires *hatzlachah*, he should be strong with *bitachon*, whose letters are *הן טוב*."

Humble Beginnings

When one remembers that everything is from Hashem, he will be humble.

People tell the following story:

There was a poor person who lived in a run-down home at the edge of town. He had a friend in the city who owned a store, where (among other items) he sold lottery tickets. Once, his friend told him, "Why don't you play the lottery? Perhaps your *mazal* will change."

The pauper replied, "If I had an extra coin I would spend it on a loaf of bread."

The store owner said, "I will buy a lottery ticket for you. If you win the lottery, you can pay me back."

In the middle of the night, the storeowner checked the lottery and saw that his friend won! He went to the end of town, in the middle of the night, to tell his friend the good

news. He first knocked on his door quietly, but his friend was sleeping deeply. He knocked louder, and he also knocked on the windows. Finally, his friend woke up and opened the door. What do you want? Why did you come here at this hour?"

"I wanted to tell you that you won the lottery and now you are rich!"

The man's mannerisms changed in a moment. He said, "How dare you wake me in the middle of the night? If anyone else did that, I would forgive them, because they don't know that I'm wealthy. But you know, so what business do you have waking me up like that in the middle of the night?"

This is the way people are. When something good happens to them, they become haughty and think they deserve the good that they are receiving. They forget that it is from Hashem and that without

Hashem's help they would remain poor.

Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* pioneered the *mussar* movement because of the following story:

There once were two poor cobblers, and the *mazal* of one of them turned around, and he became extremely wealthy. He was appointed *rosh hakahal* (president of the community). Almost everyone forgot that he was once poor. His daughter became engaged to the son of the *rav* of their city.

The wedding was celebrated with pomp and honor. Many people – among them *rabanim* and wealthy people – came in honor of the wealthy man and in honor of the *rav*. The wealthy *rosh hakahal* spent a lot of money on the wedding, and he hoped that no one remembered his humble past.

All this time, the other cobbler was still poor, and

he was very jealous of the honor that his childhood friend was receiving. As the *chasan* and *kallah*, *rav* and *rosh hakahal* stood under the *chuppah*, the cobbler put out a shoe and said to the *rosh hakahal*, "Can you fix my shoe for me?" reminding everyone present of his poor past.

The *rosh hakahal* collapsed from shame and was *niftar* on the spot.

Reb Yisrael Salanter was present at that *chasunah*. He saw what can happen to people who don't study *mussar*, and he immediately launched the *mussar* movement.

Reb Nota Zehnworth *zt'l* said that most people think that Reb Yisrael Salanter launched the *mussar* movement because of this cobbler's bad and cruel *middos*. However, that wasn't the main reason that

Reb Yisrael began the *mussar* movement. It was because the *rosh hakahal* couldn't bear the shame. Why? He had everything: wealth, honor, and *nachas*. His daughter was getting married! Yet, it bothered him so much when someone embarrassed him. Reb Yisrael Salanter, who was at this wedding, thought, "He should have taken the shoe and danced with it because of the *chasadim* that Hashem performed for him. He was raised from the lowest levels, and Hashem gave him so many honors. But he wanted to create an image that he was always wealthy and that he earned his wealth with his strength and power. He didn't want to remember the *chasadim* Hashem did for him. That is why the *mussar* movement was launched."²

2. Someone had a child and he said to the Chazon Ish, *ס'קימט צו מיר*, "I deserve a *mazal tov*." The Chazon Ish said, "You deserve it?!" Hashem doesn't owe us anything (*Maasei Ish*).

Kriyas Shema

There were six primary *arei miklat* plus an additional forty-two cities that also served as cities of refuge. As it states, ואת הערים אשר נתנו ללויים את שש ערי מקלט... ועליהם נתנו, "ארבעים ושתיים עיר," The cities that you shall give to the Levi'im, the six cities of refuge... Additionally, add another forty-two cities [cities of refuge]."

The Ohev Yisrael writes, "This mitzvah also applies in our times, because the Torah is *nitzchis* (eternal) and therefore it must be applicable even today... The explanation is, if someone committed *aveiros* and has in a sense murdered his own soul, this is what he should do for his rectification: When he recites the first six words of Shema (שמע ישראל... אחד) he should accept the yoke of Heaven with love, with *mesirus nefesh*, with sincerity, and commitment. Those are his six cities of refuge (*arei miklat*). He should add another forty-two

cities, which is the paragraph ואהבת that contains forty-two words..."

Shema is the *arei miklat* in our generation, where one runs to for atonement.

This lesson is also alluded to in the Gemara (*Brachos* 5), which says, "One should always do battle with the *yetzer hara*. If he succeeds, all is well. If not, he should learn Torah. If he succeeds, it is good. If he fails [and the *yetzer hara* is still overpowering him], he should read Shema." For *kriyas Shema* is a place of refuge, where we can be protected from the *yetzer hara*, and where we can attain atonement for sins.

Arei Miklat

When someone accidentally murders, he must go to *galus*, to one of the *arei miklat*, and he must remain there until the *cohen gadol* dies. That is when he attains his atonement. Some will be in *arei miklat*

for a long time, while others will be there for maybe just a day or two, depending on how long after their conviction the *cohen gadol* dies.

Why isn't there a set amount of time for all people, how long they must remain in the *arei miklat*? Why should some people be in *galus* a short while, while others *stay there* for many years? The *Seforno* (35:25) explains that it is dependent on the degree of negligence they had, which resulted in the accidental murder. Hashem arranges that each person is in *galus* for the exact amount of time he needs for his atonement.

The *Seforno* writes, "There are several degrees of killing by accidents, for there are accidents that one almost couldn't prevent, and there are accidents that can be considered almost on purpose. Therefore, the Torah didn't set an amount of time for

all murderers... Hashem knows... the degree of punishment each one deserves..."

Furthermore, each *cohen gadol* has his own lifespan; some live longer than others. The *Meshech Chachmah* writes that these factors are taken into consideration when Hashem chooses a *cohen gadol*. Hashem considers who will be the future murderers, how long need to be confined in *arei miklat* for their atonement, and based on that, Hashem chooses a *cohen gadol*, with the appropriate lifespan.

The *Meshech Chachmah* teaches that this is alluded to in the words (35:25), וישב בה עד מות הכהן הגדול אשר משח אותו בשמן הקודש, "The murderer should live in the *arei miklat* until the *cohen gadol* whom he anointed with the holy oil dies." The simple translation of the *pasuk* implies that the רוצח, the murderer, anointed the

cohen gadol. Obviously, it wasn't so.³

The *Meshech Chachmah* explains, "It is likely that the *pasuk* is teaching us a lesson in Hashem's *hashgachah*... [If the *רוצה* needs many years in *arei miklat* for his atonement] then a *cohen* who is destined to live long is appointed [to be the *cohen gadol*]. The opposite is also true; [if it's sufficient for the *רוצה* to be a short time in one of the *arei miklat* to attain his atonement, the *cohen* that is chosen will be someone who is destined to live a short lifespan]... This is the translation of *אשר משה אותו*, "who he anointed," because the *רוצה* caused this *cohen gadol* to be appointed, over another *cohen*."

This lesson is a glimpse in Hashem's *hashgachah*, how everything is planned

perfectly, and how nothing happens just by chance.

It states in *parashas Masay*, *והקרייתם לכם ערי מקלט*, "You shall prepare *arei miklat*" (35:11). The word *והקרייתם*, similar to the word *מקרה*, often means by chance, but in this instance, it means "to prepare." As Rashi writes, *אין הקרייה אלא לשון הומונה*, the translation of *והקרייתם* is prepared. This hints to us that even matters that appear to be natural incidences, and *מקרה*, chance, are also prepared by Hashem.

The Noam Megadim writes in the name of the *Mishnas Chasidim*, *כי אמר מקרה*, (I *Shmuel* 20:26) - *בלתי מהור הוא* if someone says that matters happen by chance, he is impure. He lacks the fundamental awareness that Hashem plans everything.

3. The Gemara (*Makos* 11:) asks: "Did the murderer anoint the *cohen gadol*? Rather *אשר משה אותו* means 'the *cohen gadol* who was anointed in his lifetime.'"

Tzaddikim said that מקרה, happenings, stands for רקמה, only from Hashem.

Someone came to the Rebbe of Kotzk and said, "I used to be wealthy, but I lost my money, and my wife died. For many years I buy a lottery ticket every week. My maid also buys one, and I check the numbers to see whether she or I won. I continued this habit even after I lost most of my money. One day, I checked the winning numbers, and I saw that the maid won the lottery! Now that I knew she was wealthy, I wanted to marry her. But I realized that if she knew that she is wealthy, she wouldn't want to marry me. So, I didn't tell her that she won the lottery. She was happy to marry me because although I wasn't wealthy anymore, I was still *baalebatish*, and I had much more money than she thought she had.

Shortly after the *chasunah* I revealed to her

that she won the lottery and that we were rich. She replied, 'But I sold the rights of the lottery to my father...'

"That's why I came here now," the man explained to the Rebbe of Kotzk. "I only married her because I thought she was wealthy. Now that she's poor, I want to divorce her."

The Kotzker replied, "Haven't you grasped by now how Hashem leads the world? He made you poor, had your wife die, had the maid win the lottery, all so you would marry her, and now you want to divorce her!"

This story is a reminder that Hashem is behind everything that occurs, and that nothing happens by chance.

Tefillah

The Rokeach writes, "After the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, Hakadosh Baruch Hu

doesn't give goodness to the Jewish nation without *tefillah*."

The Hafla'ah (*Kesuvos* 67) writes, "It is known to all those who believe in Hashem's *hashgachah* that our *parnassah* in *galus* is because of *tefillah*." He explains that when the Beis HaMikdash stood, *parnassah* came from the *מוזבה*. It is called *מוזבה* because it was *מזון* (supplied food) for the world. Today, when there is no longer a Beis HaMikdash, sustenance comes to the world through *tefillah*.

Rebbe Avraham Yehoshua Hershel of Apte, the Ohev Yisrael, *zy'a*, supported *kollel yungerleit* in his beis medresh. Every month, on Rosh Chodesh, he would give the scholars a stipend.

One of the students thought, "I don't have to daven for *parnassah* since, anyway, the Rebbe is supporting me."

Later that day, all the *yungerleit* were waiting in line to receive their monthly stipend. When it was this student's turn, the Rebbe ran out of money. "I will go bring some more money," the Rebbe said.

By the time the Rebbe returned with more money, this *yungerman* had left the line. He returned to the end of the line, and when it was his turn, the Rebbe said, "I'm sorry, but here isn't any money left."

The man was devastated: "What am I going to do? How will I manage this month without the stipend?"

The Rebbe replied, "Every month, Hashem gives me exactly the amount of money that I need to support the *kollel yungerleit*. If you didn't receive your stipend, it is certainly from Heaven. Check your deeds; see if you can discover the source that caused this."

The man remembered that he didn't daven for *parnassah*. He learned that even when one is supported by others, he will not receive his share if he doesn't daven for it.

It is written (*Amos 4:13*) ויצר הרים ובורא רוח - מגיד לאדם מה שישו, "[Hashem] formed the mountains and created wind, and He tells people what they said." Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin zy'a explained: A person shouldn't say, "How can my words accomplish anything? They are only words, only wind." The answer is, Hashem created mighty mountains, but the winds are even mightier than mountains. Winds can destroy the mountains. מגיד לאדם מה שישו, "this reveals to people the power of speech, the power of tefillah."

We receive *parnassah* through tefillah; only we are obligated to do some physical deeds as *hishtadlus*. As the *Mesilas Yesharim* (21) writes, "A person is obligated to do some

hishtadlus for his *parnassah*, because this is what the Exalted King decreed. It is like a tax that all humankind must pay and cannot escape... But it isn't that the *hishtadlus* helps, only it is an obligation..."

Bederech tzachus (in humor, but with a true lesson), a group of people were davening by the Kosel. One of them was shouting, "Ribono Shel Olam! Five hundred shekels! I need five hundred shekels! That's all I need, and it will be enough for me..." The person next to him heard his prayers, and he immediately took five hundred shekels from his wallet and gave it to him. He explained, "We are all davening for millions, and you are asking for only five hundred shekels?! You are lowering the rates."

This story serves as a reminder that when we daven, we should ask for a lot. As it says, הרבה פך ואמלאהו, "open your mouths wide [to ask for a lot], and I will

fill it." Hashem's abilities aren't limited, so why shouldn't we ask for a lot?

The Yismach Yisrael learns this lesson from an ant who only lives for six months, and its food, throughout its lifetime, is not more than one grain and a half of wheat. Yet it is busy gathering so much. Why? It is because the ant thinks, "Perhaps Hashem will decree that I should live long." Because Hashem can do anything and everything. If so, why shouldn't a person also have this emunah, and pray for a lot, because Hashem can save him beyond the rules of nature, and Hashem can grant him enormous gifts?

There was once a wealthy man who owned a furniture factory. Every morning he davened *Shacharis* in the beis medresh of one of the *gedolei hador*. This wealthy man tended to come late to the *tefillah*. Sometimes he entered the beis medresh

by *kriyas Shma*, and sometimes by *Shemonah Esrei*. He would quickly put on tefillin and rush through the *tefillah*, somehow ending together with everyone else.

The *gadol* said, "Why don't you come on time?"

The man replied, "If the rav knew what I'm going through these days, the rav wouldn't ask me this question. Be satisfied that I come to beis medresh every day. For me, that is also a great accomplishment..."

The *gadol* saw that he couldn't convince him, so he let the issue go.

Sometime later, this wealthy man came to the *gadol* and told him that there was a fire in his factory and everything burned down. "It's because I come late to *tefillah*."

The rav asked him how he knows that.

The man replied, "If the fire department had come

on time, they could have extinguished the fire before it got out of hand. They came fifteen minutes late, and by then it was too late to save the factory. So, I understand that I'm being punished for coming late to *tefillah*..."

Since then, he started coming even before the *tefillah* began, and his *parnassah* and previous wealth have been reestablished.

It states in this week's *parashah* (30:3), לֹא יִהְיֶה דְבַר כָּבֵד לַיהוָה. הַיּוֹצֵא מִפִּי יַעֲשֶׂה. One translation for יהל is to hope. We can explain that the *pasuk* is saying, "When you daven to Hashem, לֹא יִהְיֶה דְבַר, don't *hope* that your *tefillah* be answered. Feel certain that יהל הַיּוֹצֵא מִפִּי יַעֲשֶׂה, כָּבֵד, whatever you ask for will occur." Because if you daven with that certainty, you will daven with *kavanah*. Additionally, your belief that your *tefillah* will be answered helps that it will be so.

The Tzemech Tzedek of Lubavitz *zy'a* told the following story: There was a very simple Yid who lived in a village near Yerushalayim. He would come to Yerushalayim every week to sell his fruits and produce. Afterward, he would go to one of the rabbanim of Yerushalayim, and ask him to teach him what to daven in the upcoming week. Once, he came to Yersuhalayim, and all the stores were closed. "Is it Shabbos today?" he wondered. "Did I make a mistake in counting the days?"

He saw people carrying their talis and tefillin, so he knew that it wasn't Shabbos. "What's going on today?" he asked one of the people of Yerushalayim.

"It's a fast day today," the person replied. "All the stores are closed."

The simple villager went to the rav and complained, "Why didn't the rav tell me there's a fast

today? I've already eaten by mistake. Also, I didn't daven the *tefillah* for a fast day."

The rav explained that the fast was decided upon recently since it hadn't yet rained, that winter.

The villager was incredulous. "For lack of rain, you declare a fast day!?"

"Yes. Do you have a better idea? What do you do if there's no rain?"

He replied, "When my field needs rain, I go outside, and I ask Hashem for rain, and it immediately begins to rain."

"Do that now," the rav ordered.

The villager raised his eyes to Heaven and said, "Father! Your children need rain. Is it possible that You will let Your children die from thirst, *chalilah?*" Immediately, clouds rolled in, and it began to rain.

Davening with all your Heart

Reb Eliyashav's parents were childless for several years. She and her husband, Reb Avraham, traveled to the medical center in Vienna to find a *refuah* so that they could bear children, but the doctors told her, "There's nothing we can do."

Her hopes were shattered. But, not wanting to make a scene in front of strangers, she strengthened herself and didn't cry on the trip home. When she got back to Humla, she went straight to the barn where she could be alone, and wept copiously. Then she went into the house. Her father (author of *Leshem zt'l*) saw that her eyes were red. He asked her about that. She gave an excuse, but her father insisted on knowing the real reason. She admitted that the doctors couldn't find a solution for her. She held back her tears for two weeks, on the trip home,

and now she poured her heart out.

The Leshem told her, "It states (*Tehillim* 145:18), 'קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת, Hashem is close to those who pray to Hashem with the truth. How does one pray to Hashem truthfully? When one is in a situation like yours and knows that there's nowhere to turn other than to Hashem, that is a true and sincere prayer. At these times, 'קרוב ה' Hashem is close and listens to your *tefillos*..." A year later, she gave birth to Reb Eliyashav *zt'l*, who lit up the world with his Torah.

The Rabbeinu B'Chaya (35:11) discusses the halachah that someone who accidentally killed his fellow man must go to *galus* (to the *arei miklat*), but he isn't *chayav misah* (he isn't punished with death). The Rabbeinu b'Chaya writes, "This halachah demonstrates that the heart is the main part of man and the primary aspect of sins and mitzvos. For

killing by accident, he is punished with *galus*, and not with death, because he didn't *want* to kill. The same is with mitzvos. They all depend on the heart. If one does a mitzvah, but his intentions aren't *leshem shamayim*, he won't be rewarded for it... As Dovid said, 'ואשא כפי אל מצותך אשר אהבה, I raise my hands to Your mitzvos that I love.' (*Tehillim* 119)... This means I put my heart into the mitzvos... because כפי means heart, as it states, 'נישא לבבינו אל כפיים, I raise my heart to my hands...' (*Eichah* 3)."

Certainly, *tefillah*, which is called *עבודה שבלב*, needs to be said with concentration, with one's heart.

The Mishnah (*Makos* 11) states, "The mothers of the *cohanim gedolim* would supply food and clothing [to the people in *arei miklat*] so the residents of *arei miklat* shouldn't pray that their children die." As explained above, those who go to *arei miklat* must

remain there until the *cohen gadol* dies. It is likely they will be tempted to pray for the *cohen gadol's* death. Therefore the *cohen gadol's* mother would give the residents of the *arei miklat* clothing and food so that they will be content there, and they won't pray for her son's death.

The question arises: *ir miklat* is like a prison. Was the food and clothing that they received sufficient that they won't want to leave anymore? Wouldn't they still pray for the *cohen gadol's* death?

Another question: Why were the *cohen gadols'* mothers afraid of their *tefillos*? These murderers weren't the greatest *tzaddikim*.

The answer to both questions is the same: It doesn't matter who you are. If you pray with all your heart, the *tefillos* bear fruit. The *cohen gadols'* mothers were therefore afraid of their *tefillos*, albeit they were murderers because they might pray with all their heart that the *cohen gadol* die. Therefore, they supplied the residents with food and clothing, which made living there a drop more bearable. The residents of the *arei miklat* still wanted to leave, obviously, however, now they won't daven with a whole heart. Living in *arei miklat* wasn't so terrible. That is what the mothers accomplished with their gifts.

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